

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ARA-10 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 EB-08
TRSE-00 OMB-01 COME-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00
INRE-00 /092 W
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O R 141210Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8591
INFO ALL EC CAPITALS
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY LISBON
USNMR SHAPE
USMISSION USNATO
USCINCEUR
DIA WASHDC
USMISSION USUN
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
USMISSION USBERLIN
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE
AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
AMCONSUL LYON
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
AMCONSUL NICE
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 08822

USDOCOSOUTH FOR INTAF INTAF

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, FR
SUBJECT: ELECTIONS 1978: THE UNION OF THE LEFT RENEWED

-- A QUESTION OF CUTTING LOSSES?

SUMMARY. IN A SHOW OF UNITY WHICH BARELY DISGUISED A MORE PROFOUND PESSIMISM, THE UNION OF THE LEFT WAS RESUSCITATED LATE MARCH 13 AS SOCIALIST (PS), COMMUNISTS (PCF) AND LEFT RADICALS (MRG) AGREED ON A "COMMON DECLARATION" MARKED BY:

- AGREEMENT ON THE GENERAL PROGRAM TO BE IMPLEMENTED -- THE COMMON PROGRAM OF 1972 PLUS THE UPDATING ACCOMPLISHED IN 1977;
- A GOVERNMENT OF ALL THREE PARTIES BASED ON "RESPECT FOR UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE";
- GENERAL DESISTEMENT (STANDING DOWN) FOR THE MARCH 19 SECOND ROUND IN FAVOR OF THE BEST PLACED LEFT CANDIDATE IN EACH CIRCUMSCRIPTION.

NEGOTIATIONS REQUIRED LESS THAN THREE HOURS, A FACT WHICH SEEMS TO REFLECT MORE THE GENERAL SENSE OF RESIGNATION TO WHAT MANY ON THE LEFT NOW FEEL IS PROBABLE DEFEAT MARCH 19 THAN A RECONCILIATION OF LONG-STANDING DIFFERENCES. LEFT RADICAL NEGOTIATORS TOLD EMBOFF THAT THE "LEFT DYNAMIC IS BROKEN", THAT THE AGREEMENT WAS A SIMPLE FORMALITY (ESPECIALLY FOR THE PCF) AND THAT LEFT VICTORY IS PRACTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE. A SOCIALIST REPRESENTATIVE SAID IN PRIVATE, "FOR US, IT'S A QUESTION OF SAVING 120 DEPUTIES" (WHICH WOULD MEAN ROUGHLY 215-220 LEFT DEPUTIES, I.E., LESS THAN A MAJORITY IN THE ASSEMBLY).

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BLY). OBSERVERS WILL CONTINUE TO CALL THE GAME WIDE OPEN (AS INDEED THEY SHOULD IN A CLOSE RACE WHERE POLITICAL MIRACLES ARE ALWAYS POSSIBLE), BUT THE FIRST-HAND IMPRESSION AT PS HEADQUARTERS ON MARCH 13 IS THAT LEFT MANEUVERING IS NOW AIMED LARGELY AT CUTTING LOSSES ON MARCH 19. END SUMMARY.

1. THE SUMMIT RENEWED: MEETING FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE LEFT RUPTURE LAST SEPTEMBER 22-23, FRANCOIS MITTERRAND (PS), GEORGES MARCHAIS (PCF) AND ROBERT FABRE (MRG) NEEDED LESS THAN THREE HOURS MARCH 13 TO SOLVE ALL THE PROBLEMS WHICH HAVE DIVIDED THE LEFT FOR SIX MONTHS. THE PS PRESENTED A DRAFT AGREEMENT WHICH WAS GENTLY MASSAGED BY THE PCF AND THE MRG TO QUICKLY PRODUCE A FINAL DOCUMENT CALLING FOR:

- A PROGRAM OF GOVERNMENT BASED ON THE COMMON PROGRAM OF 1972, AS UPDATED IN SEPTEMBER 1977, WITH ABSOLUTELY NO MENTION OF THE SERIOUS DIFFERENCES WHICH SERVED AS THE BASIS OF RUPTURE IN SEPTEMBER AND WHICH HAVE BEEN AT THE CENTER OF LEFT POLEMICS EVER SINCE;
- A GOVERNMENT OF ALL THREE PARTIES, BASED ON THE

VAGUE PRINCIPLE OF THE "WILL OF UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE", APPARENTLY A REFERENCE TO THE BALANCE OF FORCE ON THE FIRST ROUND (WHICH IF TRUE WOULD REPRESENT A PS CONCESSION), BUT SPECIFYING NEITHER NUMBERS OF MINISTERS NOR DISTRIBUTION OF PORTFOLIOS;

-- GENERAL DESISTEMENT ON THE PART OF ALL LEFT CANDIDATES IN FAVOR OF THEIR BETTER-PLACED LEFT PARTNERS.

2. WHAT WASN'T SAID: COMPLETELY BY PASSED IN THE DOCUMENT WERE ALL THE BIG QUESTIONS WHICH HAVE ALLEGEDLY DIVIDED THE LEFT SINCE LAST SEPTEMBER:

NATIONALIZATIONS: THE AGREEMENT CALLS SIMPLY FOR THE "INDISPENSABLE ECONOMIC, FINANCIAL AND

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POLITICAL MEANS" TO IMPLEMENT THE PROGRAM OF GOVERNMENT, I. E., "NATIONALIZATION OF THE BANKING AND FINANCIAL SECTOR AND THE INDUSTRIAL GROUPS-. ABSENT IS ANY MENTION OF PS, PCF OR CFDT POSITIONS ON THE CONTENTIOUS QUESTION OF AFFILIATES AND SUBSIDIARIES:

-- COMMUNIST MINISTERS: THE PCF SETTLED FOR A MINIMUM OF GARANTEES AND DROPPED ONE OF ITS THREE REQUIREMENTS, THAT OF NO DISCRIMINATION IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF PORTFOLIOS.

THE DECLARATION WAS IN FACT MORE NOTABLE FOR ITS OMISSIONS THAN ITS SUBSTANCE, A) REFLECTING AN APPARENT LACK OF POLITICAL WILL TO PURSUE ANY FURTHER THE POINTS OF CONTENTION WHICH WERE ONCE CONSIDERED SERIOUS ENOUGH TO "RUPTURE" LEFT UNITY AND B) INDICATING ONCE AGAIN THAT BALANCE OF FORCE CONSIDERATIONS, RATHER THAN FUNDAMENTAL PROGRAMMATIC DISAGREEMENT, HAVE BEEN AT THE HEART OF LEFT PROBLEMS ALL ALONG.

3. MRG-- UNION OF THE LEFT DISCREDITED: OBVIOUSLY DEEPLY DISCOURAGED BY FIRST-ROUND RESULTS, LEFT RADICAL NEGOTIATORS PRIVATELY CALLED THE AGREEMENT A PURE FORMALITY, ADDING THAT POLITICAL WILL IS NO LONGER CRITICAL WHEN THE CAUSE IS LOST. FOR THEM, THE PCF HAS ACHIEVED ITS PRIMARY GOAL, THAT OF SLOWING DOWN PS PROGRESS, FINISHING OFF MITTERAND AND WITH HIM THE PS AS IT EXISTS TODAY. MRG REPRESENTATIVES SPOKE OF THE IRREPARABLY BORKEN" LEFT DYNAMIC" AND PREDICTED A POOR TRANSFER OF VOTES ON THE SECOND ROUND FROM PS/MRG SUPPORTERS TO

PCF CANDIDATES. IN EFFECT, THEY VIEW FIRST-ROUND RESULTS AS A REPUDIATION OF THE UNION OF THE LEFT STRATEGY, WITH CLEAR IMPLICATIONS THAT THE MRG MUST NOW LOOK ELSE-
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WHERER FOR A POLITICAL STRATEGY. A SERIOUS ROBERT FABRE WAS BACKED ON THE PRESS CONFERENCE PODIUM BY HIS PARTY'S TWO MOST FERVENT UNION OF THE LEFT ADVOCATES, FRANCOIS LONCLE AND MICHEL CREPAU: SEVERAL OTHER MRG NEGOTIATORS DID NOT EVEN SHOW UP.

4. A QUESTION OF CUTTING LOSSES: PS REPRESENTATIVES WERER HARDLY MORE OPTIMISTIC. ONE WELL-PLACED SOCIALIST OFFICIAL TOLD EMBOFF THAT THE COMMON DECLARATION WAS SIMPLY A QUESTION OF SAVING 120 PS DEPUTIES, AGAIN WITH THE CLEAR IMPLICATION THAT VICTORY IS NO LONGER THE PRIMARY CONSIDERATION. (120-130 SOCIALIST DEPUTIES, MEANING ABOUT 75-80 COMMUNISTS AND 10-20 LEFT RADICALS, IS A REASONABLE PREDICTION BASED ON PREVIOUS SIMULATIONS, BUT IN THIS CASE THE FIGURE IS PROBABLY BASED ON PRIVATE PS ESITMATES). A SOCIALIST ELECTIONS SPECIALIST, ALWAYS BEFORE EAGER TO TALK STATISTICS AND SIMULATIONS, WOULD NOT EVEN HAZARD A PREDICTION NOR SPECULATE SERIOUSLY ON PS CHANCES. THE SAME GENERAL MOOD OF RESIGNATION SEEMED TO PREMEATE STAFFERS AND NATIONAL SECRETARIES ALIKE ON THE EVENING OF MARCH 13, ESPECIALLY WHEN THE EVENING NEWS REPROTED A PS VOTE OF 6,450,00, OBVIOUSLY FAR SHORT OF THE MAGIC SEVEN MILLION AND WITH NO RATIONALE TO BE FOUND.

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TRSE-00 OMB-01 COME-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00
INRE-00 /092 W

-----101959 141507Z /45

OR 141210Z MAR 78

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8592

INFO ALL EC CAPITALS

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY LISBON
USNMR SHAPE
USMISSION USNATO
USCINCEUR
DIA WASHDC
USMISSION USUN
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
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5. ELECTORAL PERSPECTIVE: WHILE NO ONE IS READY TO COUNT THE LEFT OUT, LEAST OF ALL MAJORITY POLITICIANS WHO FEAR SOME SORT OF BACKLASH (AS HAPPENED IN 1967) WHICH WOULD SUDDENLY REFLATE THE PS, THERE ARE OTHER DISCOURAGING SIGNS FOR LEFT SUPPORTERS. FOR EXAMPLE, IT IS AN ELECTORAL FACT THAT THE LEFT DOES BETTER WHEN THE PS PROSPERS -- THE MORE PS CANDIDATES WHO GO INTO THE SECOND ROUND, THE MORE LEFT DEPUTIES WILL EMERGE. BASED ON POLLED VOTING INTENTIONS, ELECTORAL SIMULATIONS HAD GENERALLY ASSUMED FOR 1978 ABOUT TWO SOCIALISTS FOR EVERY COMMUNIST ON THE SECOND ROUND (AS COMPARED WITH 241 PS AND 183 PCF IN 1973). IN FACT, THERE WILL NOW BE ONLY 260 PS/MRG SECOND-ROUND CANDIDATES AND 166 PCF, WITH NUMEROUS "WINNABLE" DISTRICTS WHERE THE PS SHORTFALL, IN ONCE AGAIN ALLOWING PCF CANDIDATES TO SQUEAK THROUGH, HAS PROBABLY HANDED THE MAJORITY A NARROW VICTORY.

6. A COMMUNIST WINDFALL?: WITH SUCH CALCULATIONS IN MIND AND FIRST-HAND REPORTS THAT THE PCF FELL RATHER EASILY INTO LINE MARCH 13, THERE IS CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVI-

DENCE THAT THE COMMUNISTS SHARE THE SAME PESSIMISM WITH REGARD TO LEFT CHANCES ON MARCH 19. IF SHARING POWER WITH THE PS IS REALLY NO LONGER A SERIOUS POSSIBILITY, THE COMMUNISTS WOULD HAVE LITTLE TO GAIN BY FORCING THE ISSUES OF NATIONALIZATIONS AND MINISTRIES AND MUCH TO LOSE BY PLAYING THE ROLE OF VILLAIN IN CONTINUED LEFT DISUNITY -- HENCE POLITICAL ACCORD WITHOUT ARGUMENT. IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT A PS AT 22.5 PERCENT IS A FAR DIFFERENT ANIMAL FROM ONE AT 26 - 28 PERCENT. THE COMMUNISTS

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HAVE REASON TO CONSIDER THE LEFT EQUATION SUBSTANTIALLY REBALANCED, WITH THE PROMISE OF YET OTHER CHANGES WHICH COULD ONCE AGAIN RESTORE THEIR DOMINANT ROLE. THE PCF NO DOUBT EXPECTS TO SEE SOME SERIOUS INTERNAL SQUABBLING WITHIN THE PS, AS SOME SOCIALISTS BLAME THE UNION OF THE LEFT STRATEGY FOR DRAGGING THE PARTY DOWN AND OTHERS (LIKE THE CERES) ACCUSE PARTY LEADERSHIP OF NOT GOING FAR ENOUGH, FAST ENOUGH DOWN THE ROAD TO UNION. WHILE IT WOULD BE HARD TO ARGUE THAT THE PCF PLANNED ALL OF THIS (AS INDEED ITS RATHER FRANTIC TACTICAL MANEUVERING WOULD SEEM TO DEMONSTRATE), IT HAS NONETHELESS COLLECTED A POTENTIAL POLITICAL WINDFALL WHICH COULD YIELD FURTHER GAINS IN COMING MONTHS DEPENDING ON DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PS.

7. THE FINAL CAVEAT: REGARDLESS OF LEFT PESSIMISM AND A GERNALLY UNFAVORABLE ELECTORAL PERSPECTIVE, THE SECOND ROUND LOOKS AS IF IT WILL BE DECIDED BY NO MORE THAN A 10-30 SEAT MARGIN. THERE IS THUS LITTLE ROOM FOR TACTICAL ERROR BY THE MAJORITY AND SUFFICIENT POSSIBILITY FOR A POLITICAL MIRACLE TO INSURE THAT MAJORITY PARTIES WILL NOT REST EASY UNTIL THE FINAL SEAT IS WON. THE AGREEMENT OF MARCH 13 ALSO LEAVES A SLIGHT REAY OF HOPE FOR TRUE BELIEVERS IN THE LEFT.

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Message Attributes

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Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Review Release Date: n/a
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Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
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